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REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON ITS TWENTY-SIXTH SESSION

Draft report

Addendum

Rapporteur: J. A. MWANIKI (Kenya)

Chapter __. WORLD BANK HOUSEHOLD SURVEY INITIATIVES

1. The Commission considered item 11 (c) of its agenda at its 446th meeting, on 11 February 1991. It had before it the report of the World Bank on World Bank initiatives in the design of permanent integrated household surveys (E/CN.3/1991/27).

2. The Commission was informed that the Social Dimensions of Adjustment Programme (SDA) had grown substantially since the twenty-fifth session of the Commission, both in terms of participating African countries, which currently numbered 32, and in terms of the number of multilateral and bilateral agencies supporting it. The activities of SDA have also evolved considerably since its launching. The Commission recognized that the overall primary objectives of SDA were to promote a greater degree of poverty-consciousness in national planning, policy and project design. To achieve those objectives, the SDA programme also stressed the need for an adequate national information system to monitor and evaluate the degree to which poverty levels were changing under economic adjustment. Hence, the involvement of SDA with statistics was as a means rather than an end. Although surveys were an instrument, the SDA programme emphasized the need for utilization of all existing data.

3. Some members expressed concern that SDA might promote the setting up of new or alternative statistical structures and overwhelm other statistical work. The

Commission was, however, informed that that was not the case and that one of the initial activities of an SDA country project preparation mission was to review existing data sources so as to identify priorities with national institutions, determine where data gaps exist and how the SDA project could best fill those gaps. The Commission was further informed that this would ensure that full use was always made of existing statistical sources before any new data collection programme was proposed. It was further pointed out that the design of a programme for a country in all circumstances involved nationals, including all major data users.

4. The Commission noted that an important activity of the regional SDA programme had been the development of prototype survey instruments that were made available to participating countries to measure the incidence and distribution of poor and vulnerable groups. The attention of the Commission was drawn to three such instruments: the Integrated Survey, a multi-survey similar to the Living Standards Measurements Study (LSMS); the Priority Survey, a light-monitoring survey designed to identify vulnerable household groups and monitor social indicators for those groups over time, and a Community Survey designed to collect information on the socio-economic infrastructure servicing the various household groups. The Priority Survey is already being implemented in a number of countries as a means of providing timely and inexpensive information on current social trends.

5. Several members of the Commission welcomed the emphasis placed by the SDA programme on the need for flexibility in the design of national SDA projects and on the clearly stated objective of ensuring that the SDA surveys would be implemented within the framework of national statistical activities and be closely coordinated with other ongoing survey activities.

6. The Commission also welcomed the objective of the SDA programme to strengthen national institutions in data collection, monitoring and dissemination, data analysis, training of nationals and establishment of viable and sustainable survey programmes.

7. The Commission requested that use be made of successful experience with SDA in the implementation of new SDA projects.

8. References were made to an interim evaluation report of SDA, but the Commission was of the view that it would be difficult to comment on a document that had not yet been presented for discussion by the SDA Steering Committee nor submitted to the Commission.

9. The Commission also noted the presentation of the LSMS programme. It was explained that the LSMS approach to survey-taking had moved beyond the experimental phase and was now generally considered to be an integral part of conventional survey systems.

10. The Commission noted that LSMS, which had first been piloted in Africa, was now operating in a number of countries in Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia and the Middle East and that there was now also interest in the programme in Eastern Europe. Several members in whose countries LSMS had been operating expressed their

satisfaction with the programme. Policy relevance and flexibility were stressed by two members whose countries had recently launched LSMS surveys. They further stressed that the survey would yield data covering a large number of important topics.

11. The Commission noted with interest that LSMS, which has been on the "cutting-edge" of developing PC-driven survey technology, considered that other programmes and statistical initiatives were now equally involved in that area and that it sought close collaboration with them.

Action taken by the Commission

12. The Commission:

(a) Appreciated the contributions of LSMS in the areas of methodological design, survey development and analysis and recognized its work in the area of PC-based survey design;

(b) Noted the focus of SDA on developing national information systems that feed relevant information directly into the policy-making process and welcomed the involvement of users in determining survey priorities;

(c) Noted with satisfaction the progress that had been achieved in coordination between LSMS and NHSCP; also noted the progress that had been made in coordinating SDA activities with other statistical programmes, more particularly, NHSCP; while recognizing the progress made, noted the complexity of some of the issues and strongly urged that efforts to improve coordination be intensified; cautioned against complacency in the area of coordination and emphasized the need for the eradication of competition; stressed the importance of regular, joint or simultaneous missions, exchange of information and further efforts to coordinate programmes at the country level as a means to enhance cooperation;

(d) Welcomed the increased flexibility and responsiveness to national priorities in the design of national SDA projects;

(e) Deferred giving endorsement to SDA inasmuch as sufficient evidence had not yet been received by the Commission;

(f) Requested the World Bank to prepare a progress report for submission to the Commission at its twenty-seventh session.